



GREENSBORO URBAN AREA Metropolitan Planning Organization

TECHNICAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE

Minutes of March 19, 2003

1:30 p.m. Greensboro, NC

**Blue Room (County Commissioners' Briefing Room)
Old Guilford County Courthouse**

ATTENDANCE

Jim Westmoreland	GDOT	Frank Wyatt	Greensboro Engineering Dept.
Tyler Meyer	GDOT	Kimberly Hinton	NCDOT – Statewide Planning
Jeff Sovich	GDOT	Scott Rhine	PART
John Hunsinger	NCDOT	Adam Fischer	GDOT
Tom Martin	Greensboro Planning Dept.	Craig McKinney	GDOT
Mark Kirstner	Guilford County Planning Dept.	Paul Muschick	<i>Greensboro News & Record</i>
Peggy Holland	GDOT	Angie Nail	Emert Reporting Services
Libby James	GTA		

Jim Westmoreland called the meeting to order at 1:33 p.m. and introduced Peggy Holland, GDOT's new Transportation Planner, to the Committee.

Action Items

1. Approval of Minutes of February 26, 2003

Kimberly Hinton requested that her introduction as Greensboro's new coordinator within the NCDOT Statewide Planning Branch be reflected in the minutes. She also requested that the minutes be clarified under Business Item 4, Further Consideration of Southwest Metropolitan Area Boundary Line to more accurately reflect the timeline and events that had transpired in this process. She further requested that the minutes reflect the fact that she supplied a copy of the Statewide Planning Branch draft agreement for the use of STP-DA funds for planning purposes. Jim Westmoreland stated that the clarification would be reflected in the minutes of the meeting.

Tom Martin moved for the approval of the February 26, 2003 minutes, as amended. Frank Wyatt seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes as amended.

2. Amend FY '03 PWP and FY '04 UPWP

Tyler Meyer reported to the Committee that the proposed amendments are procedural in nature. At the end of each fiscal year, unspent PL funds that remain in the Planning Work Program are frozen for two years before they are able to be accessed again. This situation is the result of NCDOT accounting procedures. These amendments would allow the PL funds anticipated to be unspent during the current fiscal year to be programmed directly into next year's Unified Planning Work Program. The anticipated amount of unspent funds to be shifted is \$90,000. The proposed amendments would simultaneously amend both work programs to accomplish this shift.

Tom Martin moved for approval of the amendments. Frank Wyatt seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

Jim Westmoreland asked if there are possible alternatives that the state could incorporate to eliminate yearly amendments to these programs. Tyler Meyer stated that there are no possible alternatives which would eliminate yearly amendments; however, the question to modify NCDOT's accounting procedures could be approached again. Jim Westmoreland requested the matter be discussed further with NCDOT regarding possible alternatives.

Jim Westmoreland also asked how soon the funds are available after the funds are returned to the unused balance. Kimberly Hinton noted that once the audit is complete and the previous year's account is closed out, the funds are available immediately. Until recently, the funds have not been available for two years; however, with recent improvements in processing speed, this interval has been reduced to approximately one year.

3. Triad Regional Travel Demand Model MOAs

Jeff Sovich stated that the two memoranda were developed by the four MPOs in the Triad, PART and NCDOT. These documents would replace those that were introduced and adopted by the MPO in April of 2002. The main MOA establishes the criteria and procedures for development and use of the Triad Regional Travel Demand Model. The supplemental MOA establishes the criteria and procedures for maintenance of the model on an ongoing basis. It clarifies the role that PART would play in the planning and model upkeep process. The recommended action is to approve the memoranda of agreement for the Triad Regional Demand Model.

Scott Rhine reported that the recent changes made by Statewide Planning to the original document primarily affect Section 5, which identifies the model custodian and defines that role. The changes were minor in detail, but they were substantial enough to be brought before the MPOs. PART also made some revisions to the original MOA. Statewide Planning has now re-signed the revised document prior to circulating it among the MPOs for their approval. Burlington/Graham MPO and the PART Board have already signed the documents.

Tyler Meyer remarked that the main difference between this version of the MOA and the previous version is that this version clarifies PART's role in the future as the custodian of the model.

Mark Kirstner moved to recommend to the TAC approval of the Triad Regional Travel Demand Model MOAs. Libby James seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved by the Committee.

4. Approve 2004-2010 MTIP for State Purposes

Jeff Sovich reported that the 2004-2010 MTIP document began with a draft version that was distributed in December of 2002, which has since been revised. The revised document includes updates to the highway and transit projects, public comments received, and updated information regarding the federal financial outlook. The schedules for some highway projects have changed slightly. Major projects that experienced changes are the Eastern Urban Loop, Groometown Road widening, and Gallimore Dairy Road widening. The changes to these projects reflect shifts in the construction schedules needed to balance funds across program years. These changes show up as one-year delays in completion, but represent minor shifts of only a few months. The program of transit projects has also been updated. GTA's projects reflect revised cost assumptions and various shifts to optimize ratio among planning capital, operating, and maintenance expenditures. PART's revised project list reflects updated project cost assumptions. Additionally, for those PART projects which are anticipated to be located within multiple MPO areas, the total project costs have been divided proportionally.

Two public comments regarding the 2004-2010 MTIP have been received, which are now incorporated into the revised MTIP document. The comments include those submitted by Rockingham County regarding the Northern/Eastern Urban Loop and the NC 68/US 220 Connector, and those delivered by Sandy Carmany at the NCDOT Division 7 public meeting.

The revised MTIP now includes updated information on the federal financial outlook, specifically regarding the 2003 federal appropriations bill, which has been signed into law. This enactment establishes the 2003 federal highway funding amount at \$31.8 billion; the same as the 2002 level.

The MTIP adoption process and timeline have changed from what has been discussed in previous meetings. New FHWA guidance lays out an additional series of steps for demonstrating that the MTIP is consistent with the current LRTP and conformity analysis. The result is that final MTIP adoption is now expected in July 2003, following a formal Air Quality Conformity Finding. Until then, the NCDOT has requested MPO endorsement of the program of projects in the MTIP to support the adoption of the State TIP. The recommended action is to approve the revised MTIP for state purposes.

Tyler Meyer moved to recommend to the TAC approval of the revised MTIP for state planning purposes. Kimberly Hinton seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

5. Roger Sheats' Letter on G.S. 136-200.4

Tyler Meyer stated that the purpose of the letter from Deputy Secretary Roger Sheats is to clarify interpretation and implementation of the NC General Statutes, Section 136-200.4. The apparent purpose of this section is to achieve higher levels of coordination and cooperation among the metropolitan areas of the state. One provision discussed in the Sheats letter concerns the requirement for a unified strategy for achieving conformity among adjacent MPOs. In particular, this provision states that adjacent MPOs in non-attainment areas have one year to consult on and develop appropriate emissions reduction strategies, and to then incorporate those strategies into their long-range transportation plans. The problem with the interpretation in the letter is that a third criteria is added, which is that the MPOs achieve conformity. So, if for some reason conformity lapses, the MPOs are consequently in violation of this statute, and subject to sanctions above and beyond those imposed by federal regulations. The proposed resolution seeks further clarification on the interpretation of the provisions in question, as well

as an effort by NCDOT to engage the MPOs in a consultation process with affected stakeholders, so that a more appropriate policy can be devised. The recommended action is to take action in response to the letter, specifically by approving the proposed resolution.

Kimberly Hinton advised the Committee that she was not previously aware of this guidance letter, and consequently could not provide any additional insight into the intent of the letter.

Frank Wyatt moved for recommendation to the TAC for approval of the resolution in response to the letter from Roger Sheats. Scott Rhine seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

Business Items

1. PART Update: Regional Transit Major Investment Study

Scott Rhine distributed copies of executive summaries of the study to the Committee. The 1997 General Assembly appropriated funds for commuter rail and inter-city passenger rail projects. The funding was limited and funds included State funds and STP funds. The purpose of the MIS is to satisfy federal requirements in order to show improvement in air quality and mobility resulting from the proposal, and also provide additional transit options and services. The two alternatives that were used in the study were rail (diesel multiple unit) alternative and the bus rapid transit (BRT) alternative. The alignments that were developed through the study include three segments coming out of High Point, one to Winston-Salem, one to the airport, and one to Greensboro. For both the rail alternative and the BRT alternative, the corridor from Winston-Salem to High Point would follow US 311. Similarly, corridor from High Point to the airport would follow NC 68. For the rail alternative, the proposed corridor from High Point to Greensboro would follow the existing rail line, where as if the BRT alternative is selected this corridor would follow Business 85. To compare cost, environmental impacts and ridership, the east/west corridor was divided into three segments. For these three segments, the average cost per rider ratio is roughly \$19.50.

The next steps in the study include requesting entry into the engineering phase of the east/west corridor, establishing a predictive model to assess the potential traffic and air quality effects of the proposed alternatives, presenting findings reports to the MPOs, and applying for federal funding through the preliminary engineering process. The biggest challenge in this region will be obtaining federal funding for this project within the scheduled timeline for these services to be completed, which is approximately 2012.

2. Airport Area Transportation Study

Tyler Meyer stated that the Airport Area Transportation Study stakeholders have identified a recommended alternative. The alternative includes a direct connection between I-40 and the Business 40 split, extending across NC 68 to the Oak Ridge Road interchange at Bryan Boulevard. Further environmental work will be needed to more precisely define the alignments of the facilities proposed by the recommended alternative.

The next step in this process includes a joint public meeting in April with PART. This meeting would include topics on the recommendations of the study and would present the proposed Thoroughfare Plan amendment to be submitted to the TAC for adoption in May.

Jim Westmoreland recognized the important contributions that PART has made in coordinating this study. He added that strong endorsements would be needed to secure additional funding for the implementation of the recommended alternative.

3. Current Studies: Elm-Eugene Street Widening and Cone Boulevard Extension

Adam Fischer illustrated the Elm-Eugene Street improvement project from Vandalia Road to North of the Urban Loop interchange. This project was identified as part of the City of Greensboro's 2000 transportation bond package. A feasibility study has been completed for the interchange. A preliminary design is underway on this project.

Jim Westmoreland commented that the business community has interest in the land use opportunities that will be created and favors accelerating this project. A developer with an active project in the vicinity is paying for the planning and design portion of the Elm-Eugene Street widening.

Adam Fischer stated that this project would be let to contract in the Spring of 2004 with a completion date of 2005. The roadways are going to be four-lane median-divided facilities with sidewalks on each side. The estimated cost is \$2.8 million.

He also reported on the Cone Boulevard Extension project. The City plans to extend Cone Boulevard eastward to the Eastern Urban Loop at Hines Chapel Road, and extending Nealtown Road north to intersect Cone Boulevard. The extension of Cone Boulevard would create a new alternate access into White Street landfill. Work on the feasibility study for the extension of Cone Boulevard to the Nealtown Road intersection will continue through April. The contract letting time for this project is expected to be Spring 2004, with completion in twelve to eighteen months.

Jim Westmoreland noted that the connection of Cone Boulevard from Nealtown Road to the Urban Loop would provide additional access to the City's recently acquired indoor soccer facility and to nearby recreational amenities. A funding source for the remainder of this connection has yet to be identified. The City Council is looking to work with the General Assembly to obtain funding for this interchange, as well as the interchange at the Fleming to Lewiston Connector Road, by inclusion in the statutory definition of the Greensboro Urban Loop, thereby making both eligible for Highway Trust Funds.

4. Other Strategic Reports

Update on Mobility Greensboro (Long Range Public Transportation Plan)

Libby James distributed a handout regarding the completed work on the study. The Long Range Public Transportation Plan comprehensive study is underway and continues to make progress. GTA would provide innovative services to offer a variety of travel choices to all citizens/visitors to the Greensboro area. A telephone survey of current transit non-users showed that 40% of the respondents were regular transit users before moving to the Greensboro area, and that 55% of these former users stopped using transit when they moved to Greensboro because they had gained access to a car or because the available routes did serve their travel needs. Over 70% of the respondents indicated the biggest drawback to public transportation is that the service is not as convenient as a car, and that it takes too long to travel on the bus. The Mobility Greensboro study also includes a public outreach program. The program is underway and a range of opportunities is being developed. The first consensus-building workshop will be held Thursday, March 27, from 2:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the Greensboro Public Library.

Jim Westmoreland emphasized the importance of this study and encouraged input from the Study Advisory Committee. The outcome of the study needs support continued growth and improvement of the local inner-city transportation option as much as possible to advance a long-term solution for regional transportation challenges.

Other Items

1. TCC Member Update

Mark Kirstner expressed his appreciation for the hard work of Tyler Meyer, Craig McKinney and Jeff Sovich in keeping the County and Towns informed of transportation issues. In addition, the Guilford County Planning Department has been chosen to lead the update of the County's comprehensive plan. This effort will include examining the cost of County services and effects of growth on those services. The department will be requesting information from the MPOs at a future date regarding public education.

Kimberly Hinton advised that the Greensboro MPO was recently awarded funding for three enhancement projects, and that MTIP amendments for these projects will be brought by Tyler Meyer to the TCC next month.

Scott Rhine stated that the Internet-based trip request form for rural non-emergency medical transportation is available at the website: www.cctransit.org and a toll free number is available on the website. There are arrangements being made with Wesley Long to establish a working group with social workers.

Jim Westmoreland commented that he would like to invite Fred Fontana to a future TCC/TAC meeting to give an overview of the services they provide.

The TCC adjourned at 3:05 p.m.